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SOME EDGAR ALLAN POE LETTERS

AL 2975.063



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FROM

William K. Bixby

St. Louis

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From

W. H. B. & Co.

1915

SOME EDGAR ALLAN POE LETTERS

**SOME EDGAR ALLAN
POE LETTERS**

**Printed for private distribution only from
originals in the collection of W. K. Bixby**

**WILLIAM K. BIXBY
ST. LOUIS, MO.
MCMXV**

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of 1000.*

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SOME EDGAR ALLAN POE LETTERS

On October 8, 1849, the day after Edgar Allan Poe's mysterious and tragic death at "The Church Home" in Baltimore, the Reverend Rufus W. Griswold, his literary executor, made a significant jotting in his diary:

"Wrote, hastily, two or three columns about Poe, for the Tribune."

The *hasty* judgment there expressed, and reaffirmed in Griswold's later Life of Poe, helped for many years to prejudice public opinion against the brilliant, erratic, and ill-fated genius. It was not allowed, however, to pass without protest and dissent; for as time went on, the world more and more realized the greatness of the man as a literary artist, and it became more and more impossible that he could have accomplished what he did in his short life, had he been a worthless and dissipated wretch such as he was depicted by Griswold. Letters, personal recollections,

the evidence of his own life-work, the sum-total of his achievements, gradually revised the old estimate and almost completely reversed it. The shadows were not indeed eliminated, for his own confessions agree with contemporary witnesses that he had serious faults and defects of temperament. Most human beings have failings of one kind or another and, as in Poe's case, they are frequently intensified by adverse circumstances and unfavorable environment.

The worst charges against Poe are those brought by Griswold; he gave it to be understood that he was an habitual drunkard; that he was unreliable; that he was filled with gnawing envy; that he was so arrogant that people who otherwise might have admired him were turned against him; that he was hot-tempered and recklessly irascible; that he lacked moral susceptibility; that he had "little of the true point of honor"; that even his ambition to succeed was in order "that he might have the right to despise a world which galled his self-conceit," and not out of esteem or love of his species.

Poe occasionally drank too much; but he

"House of Illusion" - as also in "The House of Illusion" -
and "The House of Illusion" -

Q. I have made a, "The House of Illusion" -
and now for "The House of Illusion" -
consequently, "The House of Illusion" -
and "The House of Illusion" -

"The House of Illusion" -

as also "The House of Illusion" -
and "The House of Illusion" -

with the exception of
the first.

given by the country, and of Edgar & the more extensive vision
of Hawthorne's imagination; and, although, as we see
and yet it has well maintained its claims to its authority,
yet there are few writers in this country — to be if not, perhaps,
Hawthorne's own and we would say more — who can compare to
directness, in many respects, with Poe. With our aesthetical
convention, a vigorous and effective style, and an original
and independent imagination. And a high aesthetic.

Will you in kind energy to keep me as close as

very
your presence

March 24th. 1834

Edgar A. Poe.

(Hawthorne's)

you see the "writing style" of Hawthorne's
Hawthorne's style? They speak against my case & the

struggled manfully with the temptation, recognizing that with his sensitive temperament a very little was sufficient to upset his self-control. For years at a stretch he drank nothing stronger than water; the enormous amount of his productivity is a sufficient refutation of Griswold's heartless charge. Pity rather than blame should be elicited by his occasional lapses. He was proud and suspicious, seeing affronts frequently where none was intended; but his friends recognized his loyalty, generosity, and desire to be fair. He was conscious of unusual abilities and naturally chafed against the fetters that held him down. He was ambitious, but his ambition was not wholly personal; he had the clear vision of a splendid future for American literature, and he burned with zeal to take part in the creation of it as well as in the defence of it; hence his jealous endeavors to exclude from the temple unworthy priests of the Muses.

Poe was one of the few American book-reviewers, before his day or since, who had a well-founded canon of criticism, especially of poetry. Nothing could be more unfair than Griswold's assertion that "He was little better

than a carping grammarian." Unfortunately he had found good reason to animadvert in characteristically impersonal and relentless fashion on some of Griswold's own lucubrations. Griswold could not forgive the injury, but he waited until after Poe was dead to take his revenge.

Poe's great aim and ambition, which he cherished consistently throughout his tempestuous life, was to possess a periodical of his own, in which he might embody his highest ideals, both creative and critical. It was always to be "fearless, independent and sternly just." In several instances he had seen that his connection with feeble magazines had immediately resulted in their taking a new lease of life. While he was literary editor of the *Southern Literary Messenger* its circulation increased from 700 to 5,000; Graham's *Gentleman's Magazine* under similar auspices grew from 5,000 to 37,000. How far Poe was at fault in quarreling with those who hired him is a difficult question to answer. But anyone who knows the nature of newspaper proprietors may not find it hard to imagine the trials confronting an independent,

highly-gifted, over-sensitive writer with ideals. It was a crying shame that Poe should never have been permitted to establish the literary journal, the prospectus of which he was always trying to get before the public. It might have failed but on the other hand it might have done much for American letters.

The private life of a writer should be wholly disassociated from the legacy of his works. We really care but little whether Bacon or Shakespeare wrote the immortal plays, and the scandals that made Byron's life so unhappy no longer blind us to the beauty of *Childe Harold*. So we are content to take the wonderful *Tales* and the half-dozen perfect poems of Poe and treasure them for their intrinsic worth quite apart from his virtues or foibles as a man.

Nevertheless, anything definitely associated with a great man's personality can not fail of universal interest. This is especially true in its application to holograph letters. There seems to cling about the yellowing sheets and fading ink an emanation from the writer himself. His hand held the quill from which flowed the heart-felt expressions, forever fixed

in the wonderful symbolism of letters. They are far more intimate than type. Certain flourishes or turns betray to the initiate characteristics of the writer's very soul. These little curves signify the artistic nature; a certain ruggedness means will-power; regularity points to a tendency to be systematic. The perfect finishing of letters has its definite bearing on the writer's nature. Precipitancy, carefulness, generosity, and other virtues and defects are hinted at in the chirography. It was said of Poe that he never corrected his copy and that he did not cross his t's or dot his i's; but the facsimiles shown herein will refute this groundless assertion.

Even if we are not educated in the comparatively modern art of reading character by the handwriting, we cannot help feeling the fascination of autographs. Poe himself collected them. In April, 1846, he offered a number in exchange for books, and endeavored to secure others by gift. To hold in the hand the actual letters penned by Poe three-quarters of a century ago seems to bring the man into one's very presence. In this connection it may be interesting to mention the fact

that when The Bibliophile Society was about publishing the *Polish Letters* of Marat, a lady of sensitive temperament, upon taking the MS. into her hands, and without knowing who its author was, shuddered at the contact and felt a strange horror seize her; as if Marat's personality had streamed forth electrically from those innocent lines.

Four of the Poe letters here reproduced were written to Dr. J. Evans Snodgrass, of Baltimore. Dr. Snodgrass was a Virginian by birth, and was associate-editor of the *Baltimore Saturday Visitor* when Poe won the \$100 prize for his story, *A MS. found in a Bottle*, and was first beginning to win recognition as a writer of extraordinary promise.

Dr. Snodgrass, who was then editor of some other Baltimore weekly, seems to have followed Poe's career with sympathy, and having seen in the *St. Louis Bulletin* an article that would presumably gratify Poe, sent it to him. Poe acknowledged it and continued the correspondence during several years. All these letters betray both sides of his nature—on the one hand, his frankness and honesty, and his high ambition to secure a magazine of his own

so that he might have the opportunity of untrammelled criticism; on the other his suspicious and envious attitude toward men who did not satisfy his expectations, and his tendency to impute unworthy motives or unfriendliness to his rivals.

In all the portraits of Poe this dual nature is plainly recognizable in his face. One side is far nobler and more distinguished than the other; in few faces is the antinomy more distinguishable; it can be seen in the eye, in the whole contour of the countenance.

There was really no cause for Poe to be so incensed against his cousin Mr. (afterwards Judge) Neilson Poe, or for him to rage against Professor N. C. Brooks but, as one of his biographers—Professor James A. Harrison—well says, “It seems to have been Poe’s rule of conduct to interpret everything which was not active and energetic friendship on his behalf as being prompted by envy and jealousy.”

These letters of Poe to Dr. Snodgrass came into the possession of Dr. William Hand Browne of Baltimore, and from him they passed to Mr. Edward Spenser, who in 1881

communicated portions of them to a New York newspaper.¹ They are now given for the first time in their completeness. It will be seen by the facsimile reproductions that they must have suffered many vicissitudes. A quarter of a century ago some of them were characterized as "almost worn out, having seemingly been exposed to the action of water. They are written upon foolscap, folded, sealed with wafers and have their address upon the back, the envelope not having come into vogue at that time." Even now, one of them, that of January 17, 1841, and containing full details of his projected *Penn Monthly*, "is actually backed by a printed 'prospectus' of that poet's dream." These faded memorials of unfulfilled ambition are infinitely pathetic. They make us realize as nothing else could the terrible struggles of this impecunious genius.

The letter of four years later shows a far more characteristic chirography and bears a much more familiar signature. It was written while he was still (for the second time) associated with *Graham's Magazine* in Phil-

¹ They now form a part of the collection of Mr. W. K. Bixby, St. Louis.

adelphia, and only about three weeks before he moved with his poor little sick wife, whom he called "Sis," to New York to begin a new and painful battle with adverse circumstances, to come within an ace of attaining his ambition—the magazine of his own—and once more to see his hopes crushed. This letter—to Cornelius Mathews—is quite extraordinary. Mathews was born in Port Chester, New York in 1817, and had written several books which Margaret Fuller—Poe's particular detestation—had so highly commended that Poe called him her protégé. It would seem as if this dislike determined Poe to take particular pains to find all possible fault with Mathews's work. A few extracts from his review of *Wakondah* will show his animus.—

"WAKONDAH" is the composition of Mr. Cornelius Mathews, one of the editors of the Monthly Magazine, *Arcturus*. In the December number of the journal, the poem was originally set forth by its author, very much "*avec l'air d'un homme qui sauve sa patrie.*" To be sure, it was not what is usually termed the *leading* article of the month. It did not occupy that post of honour which, hitherto, has been so modestly filled by "Puffer Hopkins." But it took precedence of some exceedingly beautiful stanzas by Professor Longfellow, and stood second only to a

I wish thee much to succeed, and thank thee beyond
to "unobtrusively" although, to present objections, Barton may
have anticipated it.

What more, now these broadsides, will you do me
a favor? I have heard some mention made of a new
proposition to be established in "action" by a brigantine
a practical printer. I am anxious to know also
the details of the project. Can you procure a second
by action of mine? a prospect? If you cannot get
one, will you write me all about it - the gentleman's
name ~~and address~~

I have understood the word "action" because I really
mean what I say, and because, without a personal eye,
I would to the Hon. W. G. Brown. A. M. a second trial
such as I now mean to give. He did not help, and
I, expecting of course the treatment which that gentleman
naturally expect from another, have been just to the
realist inconvenience by the doing but printers expect
when

Very truly & respectfully yours.

Wm. L. Briggs.

Eleven 1840.

a reputation for the running the articles but none the less having
a somewhat negative merit, you will see. In criticism I will
be held a steadily, consistently, just, with friends & foe. There will
perhaps nothing strike him. I shall aim at originality in
the way of the work, there than at any other extreme quality.
I have one or two articles of my own in shape, perhaps I
could make you share, at least, the account of the author
ability of their conception. To carry out the conception is
a difficult thing — never be overcome.

I have not seen the "primary" but "no."
"secondary" is a very good little "theoretical" is
also good, and even more distinctive than the other.
I am sure of such articles as these; even in good
times they may be made very interesting.

Quaker Mead's illustrations of "theoretical"
"theoretical" is going to be the most useful
work since in the world, but with a variety of
"theoretical". The press here, in a body, have given their
in such detail, so he is — a more original. The work
which I am doing about this period

of Quaker is a very good, extremely interesting

very serious account of a supper which, however well it might have suited the taste of an Ariel, would scarcely have feasted the Anakim, or satisfied the appetite of a Grandgousier. The supper was, or might have been, a good thing. The poem which succeeded it *is not*; nor can we imagine what has induced Messrs. Curry and Co. to be at the trouble of its republication. We are vexed with these gentlemen for having thrust this affair the second time before us. They have placed us in a predicament we dislike. In the pages of *Arcturus* the poem did not come necessarily under the eye of the Magazine critic. There is a tacitly understood courtesy about these matters — a courtesy upon which we need not comment. The contributed papers in any one journal of the class of *Arcturus* are not considered as *debateable* by any one other. General propositions, under the editorial head, are rightly made the subject of discussion; but in speaking of "Wakondah," for example, in the pages of our own Magazine, we should have felt as if *making an occasion*. Now, upon our first perusal of the poem in question, we were both astonished and grieved that we could say, honestly, very little in its praise: — astonished, for by some means, not just now altogether intelligible to ourselves, we had become imbued with the idea of high poetical talent in Mr. Mathews: — grieved, because, under the circumstances of his position as editor of one of the *very* best journals in the country, we had been sincerely anxious to think well of his abilities. Moreover, we felt that to *speak ill* of them, under any circumstances whatever, would be to subject ourselves to the charge of envy or jealousy

on the part of those who do not personally know us. We therefore rejoiced that "Wakondah" was not a topic we were called upon to discuss. But the poem is republished, and placed upon our table, and these very "circumstances of position" which restrained us in the first place, render it a positive duty that we speak distinctly in the second.

And *very* distinctly shall we speak. In fact, this effusion is a dilemma whose horns *goad* us into frankness and candour — "*c'est un malheur*," to use the words of Victor Hugo, "*d'où on ne pourrait se tirer par des périphrases, par des quemadmodums et des verumenimveros*." If we mention it at all, we are *forced* to employ the language of that region where, as Addison has it, "they sell the best fish and speak the plainest English." "Wakondah," then, from beginning to end, is trash. With the trivial exceptions which we shall designate, it has *no* merit whatever; while its faults, more numerous than the leaves of Vallombrosa, are of that rampant class which, if any schoolboy *could* be found so uninformed as to commit them, any schoolboy should be remorselessly flogged for committing.

The story, or as the epics have it, the argument, although brief, is by no means particularly easy of comprehension. The design seems to be based upon a passage in Mr. Irving's "Astoria." He tells us that the Indians who inhabit the Chippewyan range of mountains call it the "Crest of the World," and "think that Wakondah, or the Master of Life, as they designate the Supreme Being, has his residence among these aerial heights." Upon this hint Mr. Mathews has proceeded. He introduces us to Wakondah

standing in person upon a mountain-top. He describes his appearance, and thinks that a Chinook would be frightened to behold it. He causes the "Master of Life" to make a speech, which is addressed, generally, to things at large, and particularly to the neighbouring Woods, Cataracts, Rivers, Pinnacles, Steeps, and Lakes — not to mention an Earthquake. But all these (and, we think, judiciously) turn a deaf ear to the oration, which, to be plain, is scarcely equal to a second-rate Piankitank stump speech. In fact, it is a barefaced attempt at animal magnetism, and the mountains, etc., do no more than show its potency in resigning themselves to sleep, as they do.

"Then shone Wakondah's dreadful eyes"

— then he becomes *very* indignant, and accordingly launches forth into speech the second — with which the delinquents are afflicted, with occasional brief interruptions from the poet, in proper person, until the conclusion of the poem.

The *subject* of the two orations we shall be permitted to sum up compendiously in the one term "rigmarole." But we do not mean to say that our compendium is not an improvement, and a very considerable one, upon the speeches themselves — which, taken altogether, are the queerest, and the most rhetorical, not to say the most miscellaneous orations we ever remember to have listened to outside of an Arkansas House of Delegates. In saying this we mean what we say. We intend no joke. Were it possible, we would quote the whole poem in support of our opinion. But as this is *not* possible, and, moreover, as we

presume Mr. Mathews has not been so negligent as to omit securing his valuable property by a copyright, we must be contented with a few extracts here and there at random, with a few comments equally so. But we have already hinted that there were really one or two words to be said of this effusion in the way of commendation, and these one or two words might as well be said now as hereafter. The poem thus commences —

“The moon ascends the vaulted sky to-night,
With a slow motion full of pomp ascends;
But, mightier than the moon that o’er it bends,
A form is dwelling on the mountain height
That boldly intercepts the struggling light
With darkness nobler than the planet’s fire, —
A gloom and dreadful grandeur that aspire
To match the cheerful Heaven’s far-shining might.”

If we were to shut our eyes to the repetition of “might” (which, in its various inflections, is a pet word with our author, and lugged in upon all occasions), and to the obvious imitation of Longfellow’s “Hymn to the Night,” in the second line of this stanza, we should be justified in calling it *good*. The “darkness nobler than the planet’s fire” is *certainly* good. The general conception of the colossal figure on the mountain summit, relieved against the full moon, would be unquestionably *grand* were it not for the *bullish* phraseology by which the conception is rendered in a great measure abortive. The moon is described as “ascending,” and its “motion” is referred to while we have the standing figure continuously intercepting its light.

That the orb would soon pass from behind the figure is a physical fact which the purpose of the poet required to be left out of sight, and which scarcely any other language than that which he has actually employed would have succeeded in forcing upon the reader's attention. With all these defects, however, the passage, especially as an opening passage, is one of high merit. . . .

By dint of further microscopic survey we are enabled to point out one, and, alas! *only* one more good line in the poem —

“Green dells that into silence stretch away”

contains a richly poetical thought, melodiously embodied. We only refrain, however, from declaring, flatly, that the line is not the property of Mr. Mathews because we have not at hand the volume from which we believe it to be stolen.

.

[Here Poe reprints the sixth, seventh, eighth, and ninth stanzas, after which he continues:]

Let us endeavour to translate this gibberish, by way of ascertaining its import, if possible. Or, rather, let us state the stanzas in substance. The spirit *lowers*, that is to say, *grows angry*, and speaks. He calls upon the wild woods to tremble, and upon the cataracts to sound their voices which have the tone of an organ. He addresses, then, *an* Earthquake, or perhaps Earthquake in general, and requests it to *level flat* all the Deep Craggs which are bound by massy tenures in earth — a request, by the way, which any sensible Earthquake must have regarded as tautologi-

cal, since it is difficult to level anything otherwise than *flat* — Mr. Mathews, however, is no doubt the best judge of flatness in the abstract, and may have peculiar ideas respecting it. But to proceed with the Spirit. Turning to the Winds, he enjoins them to howl and break the peace that broods above this world and steadfastly eludes their power — the same peace that mocks at Dismay 'mid streams, rocks, et cetera. He now speaks to the night-shadowed Rivers, and commands them to lift their dusky hands, and clap them harshly *with a sullen roar* — and as *roaring* with one's *hands* is not the easiest matter in the world, we can only conclude that the Rivers here reluctantly disobeyed the injunction. Nothing daunted, however, the Spirit, addressing a thousand Pinnacles and Steeps, desires them to deplore the glory that departs, or is departing — and we can almost fancy that we see the Pinnacles deploring it upon the spot. The Lakes — at least such of them as possess azure waves and snowy strands — then come in for their share of the oration. They are called upon to observe — to take notice — that above them stands no ordinary character — no Piankitank stump orator, or anything of that sort — but a Power; — a power, in short, to use the exact words of Mr. Mathews, “that *utters forth* his loud behest, till mountain, lake, and river shall attest the puissance of a Master's *large commands*.” *Utters forth* is no doubt somewhat supererogatory, since “to utter” is of itself to emit, or send forth; but as “the Power” appears to be somewhat excited he should be forgiven such mere errors of speech. We cannot, however, pass over his boast about uttering forth his

loud behest *till* mountain, lake, and river shall obey him — for the fact is that this threat is *vox et preterea nihil*, like the countryman's nightingale in Catullus; the issue showing that the mountains, lakes, and rivers — all very sensible creatures — go fast asleep upon the spot, and pay no attention to his rigmarole whatever. Upon the "large commands" it is not our intention to dwell. The phrase is a singularly mercantile one to be in the mouth of "a Power."

.

It appears to us that the author of "Wakondah" is either very innocent or very original about matters of versification. His stanza is an ordinary one. If we are not mistaken, it is that employed by Campbell in his "Gertrude of Wyoming" — a favourite poem of our author's. At all events it is composed of pentameters whose rhymes alternate by a simple and fixed rule. But our poet's deviations from this rule are so many and so unusually picturesque that we scarcely know what to think of them.

.

What do you mean by a "quivered stream"; "a shapeless gloom"; a "habitable wish"; "natural blood"; "oak-shadowed air"; "customary peers," and "thunderous noises"?

What do you mean by

"A sorrow mightier than the midnight skies"?

What do you mean by

"A bulk that swallows up the sea-blue sky"?

Are you not aware that calling the sky as blue as the sea, is like saying of the snow that it is as white as a sheet of paper?

What do you mean, in short, by

"Its feathers darker than a thousand fears"?

Is not this something like "blacker than a dozen and a half of chimney-sweeps and a stack of black cats," and are not the whole of these illustrative observations of yours somewhat upon the plan of that of the witness who described a certain article stolen as being of the size and shape of a bit of chalk? What do you *mean* by them? we say.

And here, notwithstanding our earnest wish to satisfy the author of "Wakondah," it is indispensable that we bring our notice of the poem to a close. We feel grieved that our observations have been so much at random;—but at random, after all, is it alone possible to convey either the letter or the spirit of that which, a mere jumble of incongruous nonsense, has neither beginning, middle, nor end. We should be delighted to proceed—but how? to applaud—but what? Surely not this trumpery declamation, this maudlin sentiment, this metaphor run-mad, this twaddling verbiage, this halting and doggerel rhythm, this unintelligible rant and cant! "Slid, if these be your *passados* and *montantes*, we'll have none of them." Mr. Mathews, you have clearly mistaken your vocation, and your effusion as little deserves the title of *poem* (oh, sacred name!) as did the rocks of the royal forest of Fontainebleau that of "*mes déserts*" bestowed upon them by

Francis the First. In bidding you adieu we commend to your careful consideration the remark of M. Timon, "*que le Ministre de l' Instruction Publique doit lui-même savoir parler Français.*"

Afterwards, becoming personally acquainted with Mathews, who seems to have been serviceable to him in his tremendous controversy with Thomas Dunn English, author of the famous song, *Ben Bolt*, Poe tried to minimize the truculency of his strictures by characterizing them as "impudent and flippant"; and perhaps he apologized rather too obsequiously—see facsimile of letter dated March 15, 1844. Doubtless Mathews would have agreed with James Russell Lowell who, only a week before the date of this letter, wrote to Poe saying:

"I care not a straw *what* a man says, if I see that *he* has *his* grounds for it, and knows thoroughly what he is talking about. You might cut me up as much as you pleased and I should read what you said with respect, and with a great deal more of satisfaction than most of the praise I get affords me."

Poe, however, frequently sneered at Lowell, leveled at him his favorite charge of plagiar-

ism, and ultimately won his ill will. The trouble was, Lowell had included him among the objects of his satire in *The Fable for Critics*:

There comes Poe, with his raven, like Barnaby Rudge,
Three-fifths of him genius and two-fifths sheer fudge,
Who talks like a book of lambs and pentameters
In a way to make people of common sense damn meters.

Going on, Lowell includes both Poe and Mathews in a common protest:

— But hey-day! What's this? Messieurs Mathews and Poe,
You mustn't fling mud-balls at Longfellow so.

One of the last letters written by Poe just before he left Richmond on the fatal journey that was to end his unhappy life contained these words:

Talking of gold and of the temptations at present held out to "poor-devil authors," did it ever strike you that all which is really valuable to a man of letters — to a poet in especial — is absolutely unpurchasable? Love, fame, the dominion of intellect, the consciousness of power, the thrilling sense of beauty, the free air of Heaven, exercise of body and mind, with the physical and moral health which result — these and such as these are really all that a poet cares for.

With \$1500 in his pocket, with the assurance of a good position as literary editor of

to make my set complete.

I regret that you have not received the Gout
Chairs; with regularity - but the fault is my own - as
I neglected to have your name put upon the free
list; an oversight which I hasten to remedy.

With high respect & sincere esteem
Your friend

Edgar Allan Poe

all confidence, & because I think you will be
pleased to hear of my well-doing - not, I assure
you, in any spirit of vain-gloriousness - a feeling which
I am above.

It grieves me much that I can say not
a word touching compensation for articles in Chapman.
The intense pressure has obliged Mr B. with nearly every,
if not with every, contributor in the country, to dis-
continue paying for contributions. Mr B. pays for
nothing - and we are forced to fill up as we can.
You know that I appreciate your talents and did
we pay at all your writings would command
in my judgment the highest price. Could we
get them, for a while, gratis, how gladly would
I use them! - but this is requesting too much.

I have never received the note of the Chapman
since the one containing my "Small Talk" - if ~~it~~
and the remaining notes to spare, I would be glad

the *Examiner*, with the prospect of being able to issue his own magazine, and with all arrangements made for his marriage to Mrs. Sarah Elmira Shelton, he started for New York. He had signed the pledge with the intention of joining the Sons of Temperance, but probably was induced by the weariness of the long trip to break it. He reached Baltimore, was drugged, assaulted, robbed and left in a low tavern. A compositor on the *Baltimore Sun* found him there and penciled a hasty note to Dr. Snodgrass, saying, "There is a gentleman, rather the worse for wear, at Ryan's 4th ward polls, who goes under the cognomen of Edgar A. Poe and who appears in great distress and he says he is acquainted with you, and I assure you he is in need of immediate assistance."

Dr. Snodgrass had him taken to the hospital, where he died. The usual fatality of misrepresentation attended Poe to the very last. Dr. Snodgrass himself, depending on his memory instead of documents, in 1867 wrote a long and quite inaccurate account of the melancholy circumstances. He twisted Walker's note out of its implication and made

it read that Poe was "in a state of beastly intoxication and evident destitution." Griswold goes still further in heaping up infamous details made of whole cloth. These biographers went so far as to profane his dying lips with imprecations, whereas Judge Neilson Poe, who was at the hospital when he died, declared that he never regained consciousness. Dr. J. J. Moran, the resident physician, however, in a letter describing the last scenes for Poe's aunt, Mrs. Clemm, said that during most of the time between the Wednesday, when he was admitted, until three o'clock Sunday morning, when he breathed his last, he was unconscious or in delirium and the last words he uttered were, "Lord help my poor soul."

Poe's relatives took charge of the remains, and he was buried in the churchyard attached to the Westminster Presbyterian Church. Dr. Snodgrass was among the few present. It will be seen that the letters here reproduced have an unusual and touching interest, since they were written to a man who was so closely associated with the most productive period of Poe's life, as also with his dying hours.

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